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## Art. XXVIII.

### *Christianity and the War.*

A large portion of the christian community have, under the test of a great national crisis, recently undergone a change of conviction, or at least of feeling, on the subject of War. We do not wish to hide, nor to explain away, the fact, that, in our own case, the change has been both profound and sudden. We have entertained views on the necessity of physical resistance to evil doers that no longer seem to us either philosophical or practicable. A year ago, a military parade was to us an occasion of annoyance if not of disgust. The State appropriations for muster encampments seemed to us worse than a waste of the people's money. Though not prepared to do away wholly with fortifications, ships of war, military schools, navy-yards and arsenals, such things, nevertheless, seemed to us quite as likely to provoke as to put down hostilities. We not only believed in peace as a good thing, but as something practicable. We had faith in the efficacy of the doctrines of peace. We thought well of the aphorism, "It takes two to fight,"—an aphorism implying that if one party would not resist, the other party would be too good to aggress!

In our notions on the subject of war, we made our appeal to Christianity. We could see nothing in the Sermon on the Mount that called for, or would tolerate, the measures of war. To shoot enemies we could but regard as a strange way to love them. Our logic was embarrassed by all attempts to reconcile the policy of thrusting bayonets at the foe at the same time that we turned toward them the other cheek. To pray for those who despitefully use us, and at the same time strike them to the earth, seemed as palpable an absurdity as can well be imagined. Then there was the example of the Master, quite as authoritative as his words, in every instance, as we were inclined to see it, a sanction of the most unqualified doctrines of peace. Christ did not resist his enemies, would permit no violent measures to rescue him from the effects of their malice, but meekly suffered them to put him to a cruel death; while his lips breathed for them the sublimest words in all literature—a prayer of forgiveness.

Yet we have never formally avowed faith in the doctrine or the policy of "non-resistance"—have never felt entire confidence in the practicability of principles which in every case eschewed a resort to physical violence. Though it seemed eminently Christian when the case in supposition was that of a man meekly giving up his life rather than kill or maim his assailant, it had a different aspect when the man sacrificed not only his own life, but that of his wife and children. There was always an instinct, that, whatever might be a man's duty when his own life was in peril, he ought certainly to defend those who had claims on his protection. We have always believed in the necessity of police regulations, and of some kind of physical restraint upon the inclinations of evil men. Common sense appeared to demand so much. Since the period of our majority, we have in every instance, unless for the time disqualified, voted for presidents, governors, and mayors or select-men; and have thereby given our adhesion to State constitutions and policies, which, in the last resort, rest upon the sword.

Let us confess, that in these respects our course has not been altogether consistent. We have always had an ill-defined impression that our notions on questions of war and peace clashed somewhere! But our excuse, if not formally expressed, yet actually cherished, has been that we could not help the contradiction. In the argument, the non-resistant always seemed to come off triumphant. His premises were generally admitted, and his conclusions seemed logical. But there was another set of premises, based upon certain instincts and what is called "common sense," which called for different conclusions. Both sets of premises, though apparently antagonistic, have seemed equally palpable. It has been on the relative claims of war and peace principles, the same as many of us have been led to think in respect of the claims of "free-will" and "necessity," commonly so called. To the finite intellect, both of these, as we now look at the matter, though seemingly at disagreement, have nevertheless each an impregnable basis of *fact*. Hence, we feel at liberty to accept both without obligating ourselves to reconcile their apparently hostile claims. We assume a right to wait for a higher experience to harmonize what now seems irreconcilable. Now we have never been guilty of a greater inconsistency as respects the relations of Christianity

and War. Logic seems to educe an unqualified peace conclusion from certain premises taken from the words and works of Christ; and it also seems to get a somewhat different conclusion from certain instincts and from common sense.

The real difficulty has been that we have not felt the necessity of *determining a practical position* on the subject. And as it has been equally easy to take either position, we may have been too much influenced in our choice by *the pressure of events*—sometimes inclining more towards the one, sometimes more towards the other, and perhaps generally trying to satisfy ourselves with an incongruous mixture of the two.

We give our own experience on the subject under consideration in the belief that it reflects the experience of a large number in the Christian community, and this without much regard to sectarian relations. We suddenly find ourselves without any *matured* principles to guide us in the most trying crisis in the history of the nation; and we can recall instances in which, with more or less of explicitness, we have committed ourselves to a policy which a severe test assures us to be wholly inadequate. Hence the change of conviction and, to a much greater extent, of feeling which has come over us.

We are free to confess that we have been in the habit of over-estimating the civilization of the age and the country in which we live. Years ago we learned from Gibbon what might be expected of barbarians. But we indulged the hope that the Goths and Vandals belonged only to the early time. We did not expect that an Alaric could come from the land that had given birth to a Washington. The humiliating fact of slavery, of property in man, was indeed before us; and a class of teachers insisted with tolerably severe logic, that a man who would appropriate to his own use the unpaid toil of another, could scruple at nothing. But we had personal acquaintances among slave-holders, and knew that such an inference, however conclusive as a matter of logic, was not just in point of fact. We could give the names of slave-holders who, aside from what is involved in the fact of being slave-holders, would neither lie, nor steal, nor do an inhuman act.

Hence we have admitted the distinction between the

*simply holding of slaves* and the *extending the area of slavery.* It has not seemed strange that persons who have been educated in the midst of slavery, who have inherited slave property, who have been in the habit of presuming that the population held in slavery is unprepared for freedom, and "better off" as it now is, and who fancy they see serious difficulties in the way of emancipation,—it has not seemed strange that such persons could hold a class of their fellow men in bondage, and nevertheless, in other particulars, be exemplary men. We have heard the slave-holder say, that if there were not a slave upon the continent, the man who would first introduce one here, must be a fiend. But as the matter actually stands—the slave being here and not by his act,—he finds his hands tied. Slaves have come to him by inheritance; and the whole social system virtually compel him to keep them in the condition in which he found them. Or, if any scheme of emancipation is to be entertained, the only practicable measure must be exceedingly slow in its operation. We are not saying that this is good reasoning. To our notion, it is far from being so. We simply say, that a man might satisfy himself with such reasoning and, nevertheless, be, in other matters, a very worthy citizen and neighbor. But the matter of *extending the area* of slavery—of voluntarily establishing the institution upon territory now free—is a different matter. For this there can be no excuse; and no man can advocate such a policy except on the supposition that slavery is not only right in itself but beneficial and expedient. Of such a policy none of the early great Statesmen of the South so much as dreamed. It is certain from the writings and the acts of Washington, Jefferson, and Madison, that they would have listened to such a measure with abhorence. We have been painfully impressed with the fact, that a change has rapidly come over the Southern States with regard to the spread of slavery. A very different class of politicians and statesmen have risen to take the places once filled by those who took part in framing a constitution in which the mere word slave is studiously excluded. A year ago the purposes of leading men at the South to extend the area of the "peculiar institution" was palpable to the most casual observer. But we did not suffer ourselves to think that the moral and social deterioration had gone so

far that the verdict of the people adverse to the special claims of the South, as expressed in the late presidential election, could prove an occasion of armed insurrection.

We have been accustomed to great political excitements accompanied with threats of dissolution, yet always passing away so soon as the decision made at the ballot-box was made known. The prospect a few years ago of the election of Mr. Banks, as Speaker of the House of Representatives, was made the pretext of dissolution, the moment the "deed was done." Yet a wealthy slave-holder, and from South Carolina, too, courteously introduced the successful candidate to the chair; and all parties and factions were at once quiet. We thought that a reverence for the ballot-box had become integral in the hearts of the American people. The circumstance that any evil or wrong done through the ballot-box may always be remedied by the ballot, in connection with judicial safeguards, and the obstructions to unjust legislation in the admirable system of "checks and balances," so inherent in our form of government, it seemed to us must satisfy the most fastideous people. We knew that Southern politicians were impulsive and rash, but we did not think them insane. We gave them credit for loyalty at heart, however perverse and defiant amid the contests of a political campaign. When the great historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire congratulated the world that another irruption of barbarians was an impossibility, we credited his words in the sense in which he used them. It had not occurred to us that our own land was destined to prove the fallacy of his prediction. Our notions on the efficacy of peace principles and measures, so far as they have had a determined form, have been cherished in the belief that the world was ready for their practical application. The events of the past year have assured us that we were greviously in mistake.

Of the large number of professed Christians whose convictions and feelings in regard to war have undergone a a sudden change, it is but justice to say, that, with rare exceptions, they have never claimed that anti-war principles are adapted to every phase of human society. Most of these are believers in the Old Testament, and have admitted the justice and expediency of the wars waged by the Israelites, on the ground that only severe measures are practicable in

dealing with a barbarous people. The course of history, happily styled "the logic of events," clearly shows that mild measures will not be effective among a people as yet uncivilized. It is not a historical date, but a point of culture, that divides the period in which men are under the law, from the period in which they are under the gospel. In our times, the conviction has been somewhat general, that human society, in nations nominally civilized, have reached this point of culture. In our country, at least, we supposed that the war of the ballot had forever rendered impossible the war of the bullet. But we are startled on learning that in this fond expectation we have hugged a delusion. The old contest between barbarism and civilization is seen to be no longer one of the things that were but are not. In our own day and in our own land the strife of ages is renewed. We must put down the enemies of man by such measures as will be effective. We grieve to say, that we see no alternative other than the terrible one of the sword.

We come now to the practical question, What is our duty *as a Christian people* in the present national crisis? In resolving to put down the rebellion by resort to the sword and bayonet, must we give up our religion? In this severe ordeal must we choose whether to obey Christ or to obey the government? Is it possible to be loyal to our government and fight its battles, and at the same time be loyal to "the Captain of our Salvation?"

In every form of phraseology, we have rejoiced to believe that the Gospel of the New Testament is adapted *to every possible condition of Christian men.* It will be lamentable indeed if we have now reached a condition in which the words and spirit of Christ can no longer avail. The millions whom the religion of Christ has blessed and comforted, would find it hard indeed if a crisis is reached in which they must no longer call him Master in case they would be true to their country in its hour of peril. We must hope that this alternative before us is not this.

Another preliminary word before coming directly to the question before us. We have said, that hitherto we have formed our notions of the subject on war without the expectation that we should have occasion to practice them. Our interest in the subject has been speculative. We have sought a metaphysical entertainment, and have not so much

as dreamed that our fine-drawn theories must be put to a practical test. We trust that this practice has passed away. We must henceforth have opinions that we can use. We must no longer fashion mere speculations for metaphysical diversion, but solid weapons for actual service in the battle of life. And while we define our position, we must *fix* it. Let us not again be found with notions which we must drop the very moment we are called upon to act. We must be ready hereafter for every possible emergency. It is easy enough to chant the praises of peace and the measures of peace, while war's "rude alarm" is no longer heard in the land; but we shall be remiss in duty if a second emergency finds us without the proper mental as well as physical equipments for actual service. Never till recently, have we appreciated the wisdom of the aphorism, "In time of peace prepare for war"—an aphorism not less applicable to the necessities of the mind, than those of the body.

We must add, that there is a special reason why we should attempt to define a position now, and with great caution, for we fear that in the reaction which our minds have undergone, there is the natural danger of *extremes*. We have noticed that the severest epithets bestowed upon the rebel leaders, come not from the military profession, nor from politicians, but from the occupants of pulpits. The cry, "Hang the traitors!" came from a Christian minister, and a member of the American Peace Society! Most of us are safely delivered from the impracticable notions of what are called peace-doctrines; but there will be a strong temptation to push too far the sanguinary methods of war. To reach the true mean, and to ascertain the principles and methods that shall be effective in crushing rebellion, and yet not needlessly sacrifice the Christian obligation of charity,—if there is such a mean,—must be our object.

In the discussion of most questions, words are needlessly wasted simply from the neglect to define what is really meant. On the supposition that war is justifiable, let us determine what thought we wish this language to convey. The common remark, "I am opposed to war," is very ambiguous. Does the person who uses this language mean

that he is opposed to war *as war?* Who or what but a fiend would not be opposed to war in such a sense of the words? What nation ever declared war against another for the sake of having a war? We shall not insult the reader's understanding or heart by attempting to show that war carried on for the sake of war, is unjustifiable and unchristian. As a general principle, and merely for the sake of the practice, we are not in favor of amputating human limbs; yet there are individual cases in which it is wise and humane to perform such operations.

No person pretends to justify war except as a last resort. Every other method consistent with the vital principle involved must be attempted, and proved inefficient, before the dreadful appeal to the sword. No one will pretend to justify war except in this very limited sense of the words. In the case of a nation threatened in its rights, liberties, or existence, two questions present themselves, Are there alternatives other than war by which, in every conceiveable case, a nation may protect itself against such threats? In case it be admitted that in a given instance a nation cannot shield itself except by resort to the sanguinary measures of war, is it the *Christian* duty of such a nation to sacrifice its rights, liberties, or existence rather than resort to the terrible alternative of armed defence?

There are a few very excellent people who have unquestioning confidence in the *success* of what we may call unqualified peace doctrines, as well as in the obligation of a Christian people to trust in no other. They reason that no nation could nerve itself to fight a people that will not fight in return; and that human nature is not so depraved as to commit aggression upon persons who have not the spirit to oppose a physical resistance. There is, we have no doubt, more of practical wisdom in such convictions than the world is, as yet, able to appreciate; still there is a great fact in proof, that a pacific disposition is not an infallible preventive of assault in every instance. We must confess that the example of Christ—whether or not intended to be authoritative in its application to nations—was that of non-resistance. It is nevertheless true, that he was "taken by wicked hands and crucified and slain." It may be a question, whether the example of Christ *obligates* his disciples to feel and act upon non-resistant

principles; but so far from proving the efficiency of such principles, *considered as a means of protection*, it is simply an instance of their inefficiency.

It strikes us, however, as something absurd to urge non-resistant principles as expedients. To be good at all, one must be good for the sake of goodness. Even the aphorism, "Honesty is the best policy," is a contradiction in terms, for honesty is not policy in any sense of the word. The idea of loving one's enemies as an expedient for warding off injuries at their hands, makes a very near approach to the ludicrous. A good act performed for its own sake is a good example; but if performed for the sake of an example this very motive prevents it from being such. The good example of a deed is always and necessarily *incidental* to the good deed. And so, gentleness of disposition and a forgiving spirit may often disarm malice and avert aggression, but these beneficial results are possible only on the supposition that they are *unsought*—that the gentle disposition and the forgiving spirit are *real*, and not mere pretenses for the sake of beneficial results. To transform a virtue into an expedient is simply to destroy the virtue. It seems to us, that the question, whether peace-measures, in the unqualified use of these words, are not sufficient to save a people in every conceiveable case, is disposed of.

We must here expose a fallacy in the use of words which is very common in treating questions kindred to the one now under consideration. The question is sometimes raised whether a government has a right, on Christian principles, to resort to the methods of war in defence of its rights and liberties under any circumstances. But, in the nature of the case, there can be no such question. The only question is, have people a right to *government?* What is a government? It is a system of laws for regulating certain affairs of a people *as a people* in their social and their external relations; and the distinctive attribute of a government is in the fact that their laws are coercive, that they rest upon physical force, in the last resort upon the sanguinary methods of war. We think it an open question, whether certain men in this nation have a right to live; but if we *concede* their right to live, we do not feel at liberty to raise the question, whether they have a right to *breathe!*

The *essence* of government is force. Representatives and

senators may enact laws, and presidents approve, and judges sanction; but up to this point the vital fact of government is not touched. For all this, citizens may disobey, withhold taxes, and talk treason. Written constitutions and laws and judicial decisions are but portions of the machinery of government; the real government shows itself only when the power is reached which compels obedience. It is true, the cases are rare wherein the vital exercise of their power is requisite. Loyalty, which, to some extent, is natural, habits of obedience, the feeling that the edicts of government are to be obeyed as a "matter of course," render unnecessary a direct exhibition of the coercive element. It is said that trained cavalry horses will continue to "form into line," even after their human riders are shot from their backs. But loyalty, reverence for law, habits of obedience would rapidly fade from the hearts of the people were the fact not always present, that in case of need, the power to force obedience will promptly appear. And let the fact be kept in mind, that this power to compel is *physical*, and this, in the last resort, the power of the sword. The right of the people to have a government admitted, the right to make war, in certain contingencies, is admitted.

Non-resistant principles are essentially no government principles. Coming from a person who, in any way, acknowledges the right of government, they are absurd and powerless. The advocate of such principles must take his true position outside of government. Not by thought, word, or vote may he concede its legitimacy. So far as it is possible for a person living in the midst of government to avoid recognition of its rightful existence, he must abstain from giving it countenance, or his non-resistant doctrines will be as inconsistent as exhortations to temperance from the mouth of an inebriate. When, in November last, you voted for a President of the United States, you voted for him to compel obedience to the constitution and the laws, if need be at the point of the bayonet; you voted for him, in case of armed rebellion, to summon the military force "armed and equipped;" and, provided the order to disperse were not obeyed by the rebel horde, you voted that he should, if possible, shoot every rebel to the earth. Your vote, last November, committed you to all this. By that vote, you said that the President ought to disperse rebels—"peaceably

if he could, forcibly if he must." Do you now, on what seem to you Christian grounds, question the right of the Chief Magistrate to shoot rebels? If so, repent of the vote you gave in November, repent of every vote you have cast under the constitution, repent of every voluntary act whereby you have conceded the right of government, and take your true position, as one who denies the right of a people to have any government whatever.

We submit that the only question for us to answer is, Have a Christian people a right to a government? Does the New Testament, in spirit or letter, prohibit the existence of government? We are not to show that Christianity gives its sanction to any particular form of government, but that it recognises the *idea* of government. On this point, it seems to us that there is little room for doubt. Christ could not have said, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," (Matt. xxii. 21.) without intending to concede that some things do really belong to Cæsar. It is very probable that Cæsar claimed some things that did not belong to him—he may have claimed some things that belong only to God; but the language of Christ is equivocal except on the supposition that to Cæsar, as the representative of government, some things were really due.

The words of Paul in Romans xiii. 1-7, so familiar that we need not quote them here,—not merely concede, but positively assert, that government is the ordinance of God. By the words, "The powers that be," he may not have meant, in particular, the Roman form of power, or Nero's administration of it; we do not believe that he did mean all this; but he certainly meant to include as much as the fact of government; and his language is explicit that so much is "ordained of God." Not less explicit is the direction of Paul to Titus, "Put them (the Christians in Crete) in mind to be subject to the principalities and powers, to be ready to obey magistrates." (iii. 1). Peter, in his First Epistle, is even more particular than Paul in enjoining allegiance to the civil power. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well, *for so is the will of God*, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." (ii. 13-15.)

There is indeed a valid distinction between doing wrong, and submitting to wrong. It may be Christian meekness in the bondman to submit to the hard yoke his tyrant imposes upon him. But the explanation of such passages as we have quoted, that they merely enjoin *submission* to the decrees of rulers and magistrates, is gratuitous; for it assumes the only point in dispute, that government *is* necessarily unchristian. Besides, the language is not a recommendation, but a *direction*, to obey "the powers that be;" and the reason for obedience,—the powers that be "are ordained of God,"—can hardly be construed as calling for submission to unjust decrees rather than active allegiance to a just authority.

There is, however, a different style of argument, in which the claims of our subject may be treated. We assent most cordially to a reasonable interpretation of the words, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."(2 Corin. iii. 6.) We say most sincerely, that there is little liability to misapprehend the spirit of the New Testament; while we may wrongly interpret isolated passages, the special meaning of which may be largely determined by circumstances of time and place and occasion—circumstances not always within our means of precise knowledge. We regard it a sound formala of interpretation, that, provided due care has been taken to determine the spirit of the New Testament, no interpretation of special passages which militates with this spirit can be allowed. There can be no schism in the word of divine truth—the spirit and the letter must agree; and in case of seeming incongruity the letter must be interpreted into an accordance with the spirit; the spirit must never be forced to agree with any particular interpretation of the letter. So palpable is the justice of this rule, that in numerous cases we apply it almost unconsciously. For example, take the words of Christ, "I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law," (Matt. 10. 34, 35.) In all Christendom, what man was ever insane enough to follow the letter of this language? Instinctively, we see the spirit of Christ's words and almost unconsciously we adapt the letter thereto.

It is then the vital question, Does the spirit of the New Testament permit the existence of government, and so of the existence of that power of physical coercion—in its last resort, the power of the sword—in which the essence of government consists? We shall be told, that the spirit of Christianity is embodied in the following words: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. . . . Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." (Matt. v. 38-44.)

We concede that in these words the spirit of Christianity is embodied. But we must notice in the outset—for the style of argument with which we are now dealing requires us specially to notice—that this spirit is expressed *in words*. Here, also, as well as in the words before quoted from Paul and Peter, we have a *letter* to interpret. Surely, it would be very unreasonable to evade the force of Paul's declaration, that government "is ordained of God," by appealing to the distinction between the letter and the spirit; and then, in dealing with the words just quoted from Christ, deny the justness of such an appeal. Is there, then, any distinction to be made between the letter and the spirit in the passage now before us? A moment's attention will show not only that this distinction holds, but that, to a great extent, everybody spontaneously presumes upon such a distinction.

One item of the letter specifies, that if any one smite us on the right cheek, we shall turn the other towards him, that, if he so choose, he may smite that also. Does any one understand Christ as really meaning this? Would not such an interpretation be a very marked example of killing by the letter? Again, another item of the letter is, that if any one forcibly take from us our coat, we shall carry our submission to the point of giving him our cloak. Is there an inmate of Bedlam, even, that, in this particular, would fail to distinguish between the letter and the spirit?

Once more, the letter directs that if compelled to go with a person a mile, we shall voluntarily add another. The letter makes no exception for the possible contingency, that the person who deals so compulsively with us, may not have occasion to travel two miles, or, in case he did have such occasion, that our company might not prove agreeable to him for the whole distance! A strict adherence to the letter, even in the words that, more comprehensively than all others, embody the spirit of Christianity, it may thus be seen, will make nonsensical the most beautiful and touching language in all literature.

What then is the spirit of the passage? The answer is, in a word, *Love*—love to everybody, and so to our enemies; and, hence, implying a course of conduct in all respects consistent with this divine spirit. But do we love our enemies when we shoot at, and maim, and kill them? It is very clear that if we do such things for the sake of doing them; if we make a pastime out of the maiming and killing our foes; or if we do this as a convenient and summary way of disposing of them, when by other methods we could protect ourselves from them,—in such and similar cases, we do anything but obey the spirit of the New Testament. But here is the question, and the only question, Is there no possible contingency in which we may resort to the terrible alternative of destroying our enemies, except on the supposition that we hate them? Is the idea of loving the very person we seek in a certain emergency to maim or kill, an absurdity? The Federal government is in arms against the rebels of the South,—does it follow that the President at whose order the armies are in the field, and that every person responding to his call for volunteers, is actuated by a malignant, retaliatory spirit? We believe, and the fact is at least supposable, that in the present national struggle, the South is the aggressor; that the North has carried patience and forbearance to the last point of endurance; and that the proclamation of the President summoning volunteers to the defence of the government, was a "last resort." Now is it a *contradiction in terms* to suppose that the President has ordered out the military force with reluctance, that he pities the very persons against whom he directs the deadly missiles? Is it a contradiction in terms, to suppose that he

may strike for preservation of the government without a particle of hatred towards the persons he is compelled to strike?

We have now reached the core of our subject;—we touch the precise spot, where the fallacy of the unqualified peace-doctrine takes its start. *It is assumed*, that in every possible instance wherein a person strikes another, he is governed by a spirit of hatred. *It is assumed*, that love towards an enemy and violent resistance against his assaults —resistance sometimes necessarily pushed to the point of a deadly blow—are utterly incompatible things. *It is assumed*, that love towards an enemy necessarily involves submission to whatever he imposes upon us, no matter what the consequences to ourselves or to others. And these points are assumed as if they were self-evident—as if no one would presume to question them—as if they belong to the class of postulates against which it is impossible to imagine an argument.

We have given these several points careful consideration, and we reach the conclusion that they are invalid. We now believe, that there are contingencies in which a person may strike another and yet love him; that there are contingencies in which he may carry the point of resistance to evil doers to a deadly-blow and yet have no unchristian feeling in his heart; that there are contingencies, in which submission to the assaults of our foes, may perhaps be an exhibition of an amiable disposition, but nevertheless be not only unmanly but positively unchristian. And we believe that a national crisis has been reached in which the soldier in the army of freedom may consistently carry the New Testament in his pocket, have the spirit of the New Testament in his heart,—indeed be all the better soldier for being a Christian,—and in the deadly onset lift a prayer to the Father and Friend of all, that the fearful missile may go straight to the mark!

We are not unmindful of the fact, that war waged for any cause, however justifiable, is almost sure to bring into play the worst passions of the unsanctified heart. Nor do we forget the certain demoralization of a people under the influences attendant upon the mere fact of being in a state of war. Familiarity with scenes of carnage and blood, or even with the published records of such scenes, tends insensibly, yet

surely, to deaden the better feelings—to harden the heart—to blunt the moral perceptions, and the benevolent sympathies—in a word to barbarize a people. The demoralization attendant upon camp life, and this, in spite of discipline however rigid, is a fearful item to be taken into the account in assuming the responsibility of calling armies into the field. The mutilations of body and limb—worse to contemplate than instant death at the hands of the foe—with the attendant tortures and groans of the victims, and the speechless agony in homes once happy, but now robbed of the objects of their dearest affections, make a sum of horrors which prove that but one thing can be worse than war—the surrender of the cause in which war finds its necessity and justification.

But while these things prove the exceeding wickedness of war when carried on without sufficient cause, and while they indicate the almost crushing responsibility resting upon those who as rulers are called upon to take the initative act in the dread resort, they cannot weigh as insuperable if we concede the right and the duty of government to maintain its own existence. If such an objection were allowed to be decisive, not even Christianity could abide the test; indeed, the world has seen no other great movement, against which such an objection would be more potent. Among the occasions of strife, contentions, and war in its most terrific forms, the New Testament has been most prominent. Christ predicted as much in the words already quoted, "I came not to bring peace but a sword." But the sufficient answer to all this, is the fact that Christianity, in no sense, is the *cause* of strife; that this cause is in the depravity of the human heart and will; but that as the commands of Christ necessarily come in contact with the evil passions and schemes of men, it proves the *occasion* that brings the depravity of man into more palpable expression. It has been well said that even the devil would be amiable and peaceable if allowed to have his own way; he becomes furious only by being resisted; nevertheless the command is imperative, "Resist the devil." The rum-seller may be a most obliging neighbor and generous friend, if permitted to enrich his pocket by spreading ruin and woe without even a word of resistance. When, however, the strong arm of the law, sustained by the virtuous indignation of an outraged community, opposes

a barrier to his iniquitous traffic, he suddenly becomes defiant and quarrelsome. Whether our anti-slavery agitators have loved the slave wisely as well as zealously, we do not care to discuss in this connection. It is, however, certain that their labors have been among the *occasions* of the present national strife. But the view is narrow indeed which mistakes the occasion for the *cause*—which does not see the *culpable* cause in the domineering spirit and barbarous schemes of the self-constituted champions of the "peculiar institution." Words of truth and soberness, spoken to guilty men, will occasion strife, but nevertheless such words should be spoken.

It is enough that war carried on for a justifiable cause *need not* call into action a single unworthy passion. When the preservation of interests more precious than life renders it imperative that lives be destroyed, the order to destroy may come from a heart, and obedience thereto may come from hearts, in which not an unkind feeling is cherished towards a human being. Because, in a given contingency, we destroy our foes, it does not follow that we do not love them, but that a higher interest makes us the instrument of their sacrifice. Gladly would we escape a necessity so terrible—fraught with responsibilities so solemn. But if what we can but regard as the will of Heaven commands us, for the preservation of a priceless boon, to strike our brother, our obedience to the divine behest, rendered in sadness and pain, should not be attributed to an unbrotherly spirit. There can be no greater fallacy than that which assumes, that physical resistance, even though pushed to the last extremity, necessarily supposes that we cherish unchristian dispositions towards the human objects of our resistance.

In a world where human souls are sometimes compelled to choose between death and dishonor, there can be no question that some things are more precious than animal life. When the choice was presented to Latimer, Hooper and Ridley, either to recant their convictions or "give their bodies to be burned," they at once decided that their integrity was of more importance than their lives. The memorable words, "Give me liberty, or give me death," are to the same purport. To refer to the highest example, the scene on Calvary is simply an illustration of the worthlessness of life in the body, when obedience to the Divine Will de-

mands the sacrifice. In all this, we but repeat familiar truths. We know but little of the claims of the soul, if we even hesitate at the proposition, that there are realities infinitely more precious than animal existence.

The contest now is for the maintenance of government —our republican government—the free institutions under which we have been prospered as a people—a form of government, which, notwithstanding serious imperfections and glaring inconsistencies, is, as a whole, the most precious legacy the civil and political experience of the world has ever conferred upon a nation. Or, if it be denied that our government is all this; or, admitting so much, if it be denied that its existence is really imperilled even on the supposition of the success of the rebellion,—if these points be denied, it is sufficient for our present argument, that the people as a body, as represented by the rulers of their choice, *believe* what we allege. It may be too much to ask that a people shall act only from what they absolutely know; for absolute knowledge on the part of finite beings may not, in the things which the crisis involves, be possible. They have done all that can be expected of them, if they act from their convictions. With the great body of the people of the North, the conviction is profound and earnest, that the very existence of the best government the world has ever seen, is imperilled by the existing rebellion; and the believing of this is, for practical purposes, the same as if, instead of convictions, the people had absolute knowledge. To the question, whether such a government is worth the sacrifice of human lives, it ought to be a sufficient answer, that human lives were, at the outset, freely given to purchase it. The importance of *maintaining* the government cannot be less than that of originally *obtaining* it. Did the patriot fathers give too much for our institutions? If not, their maintenance at an equal cost, cannot be too great.

But, fixing our minds upon the *innocent* persons who must suffer from the prosecution of the war, persons who in limb and life are made the victims of a crisis for the origin of which they are in no sense culpable, it may be asked, How stands their case in the light of Christianity? Prove that the sacrifice of criminal instigators of the rebellion is just, is it Christian to put in peril the lives of the loyal and patriotic? Is it Christian that the innocent should suffer

because of the guilty? To this general question we have a ready answer: *It is a cardinal doctrine of Christianity that the innocent must suffer for the guilty.* The Author of this divine religion himself "suffered, the just for the unjust." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Take from the Gospel scheme the single fact, that the life of Christ was sacrificed for the good of the sinner, and how much would what remains be worth? The familiar words, breathed in the prayers and the songs of Christians the world over, "He died that we might live," contain the very essence of Christian doctrine. The war to crush rebellion must cost the sacrifice of many innocent lives; but in this, certainly, there is *conformity to*, by no means departure from, both the spirit and the form of the religion of the New Testament.

If the question still linger, Is not the case of the innocent victims of even a just war a hard one? We answer that *if they are Christians* (and let it be remembered, we are discussing the subject wholly in the light of Christianity) they themselves will not regard their case as hard—they themselves, who certainly ought to be best qualified to form a judgment on the subject, will not feel that they have reason to complain. There is a quality in the faith of the Christian that makes him deem it a privilege to suffer, and if need be, to die for the true and right. The worldly, the frivolous, the selfish know nothing of this marvellous attribute of a sincere Christian faith; and such, of course, are incompetent even to reason in regard to it; but to those who put it to the test of experience, its power to cheer and sustain those who suffer for righteousness' sake is no longer a problem.

We have abundant confirmations of what we here affirm in the lives of faithful men in every period of Christian history. But we need not look outside of the authoritative record. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." An apostle had abundant opportunity to test the correctness of this promise. He tells us: "Of the Jews five times I received forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with

rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen; in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in wearyness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." Yet, with such a record, the same person could declare, that he counted "all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; for whom he had suffered the loss of all things;" and he could write the words, "Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore *I take pleasure* in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." If the innocent who suffer because of the guilt of others, do not complain, there is no reason why others should complain for them; and if they affirm that in the consciousness that they have but done a high duty, they have found ample compensation for all their sacrifices, there can be no good reason why we should take them at their word.

Thus far, we have, for most part, treated our subject from a negative point of view,—our object being to show that war, in an extreme contingency, is not *forbidden* by Christianity. We must now add, that permission to act in such a contingency is substantially a *command* to act. There is no neutral ground in the world of morals. What we *may* do, we *ought* to do. The considerations which make it right that the ruling power shall appeal to the sword, are equally pertinent in making such an appeal a duty. Except in words—and here only as a convenient form of statement—there is no such thing as a negative gospel. Substantially, all the commands of Christianity are positive.

In the present war for suppressing the pro-slavery rebellion, we are anxious to determine not simply what we may do, but what we should do—not simply our rights but out duties. We should have very little heart in the work of destroying our foes, if we could reach no higher point than that of a *privilege* to do so. If the whole of duty were precisely expressed in the simple words, Christianity tells us

that we *may* destroy the enemies of our government,—on the supposition, understand, that a permission, in the Christian sense of the word, does not amount to a positive command,—we should feel that the armies of the republic could not be summoned from the field too speedily. Let it appear that we may take our choice between striking our foes and giving way to them, on the ground that either resort will be equally right and proper, and we should certainly have very little zeal in the work of human slaughter. But the supposition of a choice between such alternatives is monstrous. The killing of human beings can never, in any conceiveable contingency, be a matter of indifference. It is never that we may or may not, but that we should or should not, kill them. On such an issue, duty must be explicit and positive. Not a rebel should be shot, if duty will permit us to spare the sacrifice.

The question of positive duty will receive further answer, if we consider not alone *what it is* for which we war, but *for whom* we war. The good features of our form of government need not be enumerated—these are palpable. But were they exclusively our own,—were they the work of our own hands, were they designed to benefit only ourselves, to pass away so soon as the now living are gone from the earth,—were such the case, there might be plausibility in the pretence, that a Christian people should sacrifice them all, rather than shed the blood of their brothers.

But our free institutions are not our own—they are a *legacy in trust;* a legacy, the doners whereof are the heroes and the martyrs of all ages—the glorious host of mortals, who have given toil, and treasure, and limb, and life for the liberties of their kind;—conspicuous among whom are the bright names of Huss, faithful unto death; Luther, the emancipator of Europe from spiritual chains; "glorious Cromwell," who severed the head of tyranny; "the Father of his country," a name that need not be written. Perhaps we may do with our own as we will—surrender to the spoiler at the mere word of demand; but may we do so with a *legacy*—that which noble men have placed in our hands for *safe keeping?* May we betray a trust, and *such* a trust? Perish, the sacrilegious thought!

And for whom do we, the living of to-day, hold this

priceless treasure? For down-trodden man the world over, and for the generations unborn. If you think it Christian to do so, let the robber take *your* purse, but surrender not the treasures of the widow, the orphan, and the helpless. If we, as a people, tamely submit to the inhuman exactions of the barbarous horde that now seek the destruction of our glorious nationality—if without a resisting act, we suffer the tide of civilization to roll back its hitherto advancing wave,—if we submit to all this, we are not Christians *for we are not men.*

We have now, at some length, stated our convictions, accompanied, we trust, with sufficient reasons for entertaining them, that the people of the North, may, as a Christian people, crush the existing rebellion in the South, at any cost of life and limb. But our convictions must count for nothing, except upon the assumption, that in the Christian vocabulary, *may* and *ought* are convertible terms. We use the words, "*except upon the assumption,*" for we trust, that in this age of Christian culture we shall not be called upon to prove the point that we would assume. He that would ask for proof, that Christianity will permit its disciple to slay a human being, on any other ground than that they *ought* to slay, has not yet learned even the alphabet of Christian ethics. We do not feel called upon here to enter upon the details of any such proof.

Our position then is this: *Christian duty requires that we sustain the government in its efforts to crush the unholy rebellion.* To all who put to us the question, "Why do you make the appeal to the sword?" we wish to make answer: "We acknowledge the authority of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that authority commands us to use the sword—to use the sword because no other resort can be effective—to use the sword, not in a spirit of malice or retaliation, but in love and pity towards those whose infatuation compels the dread alternative." To the question, "Can you, even in such a contingency, be a Christian and fight?" we wish to answer, "*In such a contingency we cannot be Christians unless we fight.*"

In the ethics of war, the soldier has but one principle of duty—obedience to his superiors in command. He may not even criticise the measures of his general—the question whether they are right or wrong is not for him to consider.

He has no responsibility beyond that of obedience to orders. We are earnest in the conviction, that the present war as waged by our rulers, is not our own. We see not that we have any option in the premises. We did not desire it —we did not bring it on,—it came to us, and we must accept it. We feel that our duty is that of allegiance—allegiance to the rulers of our choice; but to them only as the subordinates of a higher authority; allegiance *directly* to them, but, in its last and final basis, allegiance *through* them, to the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is God's war; and we, the subjects of his government, have but to obey his will.

So far indeed from fearing that we cannot carry the war forward on Christian grounds, our real belief is that it cannot be carried *forward* or any other than Christian grounds. Our sole anxiety is in the fear that the war will not be made Christian. Would that every soldier of the republic were also a soldier of Jesus Christ. Let the spirit of the New Testament fill the hearts of our rulers, our generals, and our ranks, and the victory is achieved. Let our army become Christian, and "the wrinkled front of war" would soon be smooth; for against such a rock, the crusade in the cause of human bondage would quickly split. Fight in the name of the Prince of Peace—fight in the spirit of love—fight in that sense of obedience to the Divine Will, which makes every selfish fear vanish—fight in that love for human kind, which welcomes and gladly welcomes stripes, bonds, imprisonment, and death, provided the right shall triumph in the end,—fight not as hating or wishing harm to those you strike, but as obeying only Him who, as the Giver of life, has the right to take it when the welfare of His people demands the sacrifice,—in a word, *fight as a Christian people*, and not all the kingdoms of this world can break the arm of liberty, or even mar the glorious fabric of a republic in whose perpetuity and progress rest the hopes of civilized humanity. G. H. E.

## Art. XXIX.

### *Poetry in Prose.*

(Continued.)

Hugh Miller possessed a calm and clear mind, a warm and active imagination, and a singular force in his form of expression far above the learned flippancy of the schools. His art was the art of nature. His thoughts came with the weight and the succession of billows, agitating the depth of his soul by the weight of their movement, arousing all the latent fires to a glowing heat, and making all objects of nature which he touched big and active with intelligence. Miller was one of nature's noblemen, and it is better for Scotland that he has lived. His thoughts will carry pleasure to thousands, and his example a living energy to striving poverty and generous ambition.

We have quoted Humboldt and Miller as men having minds keenly susceptible of impressions from nature, keenly alive to her living beauties, with the power to reproduce them in simple, expressive, and dignified language. They both show great power in abstract thought and general conclusions; but in their investigations and culture they have confined themselves to the study and delineation of nature, and in this direction have expended the wealth and power of their imaginations. Physical beauty, flowing in the ocean, climbing up to sublimity in the mountains, resting upon the plain, or breathing sweetly out of the multiforms of the floral world, is exceeded by a higher and more exquisite beauty which lives in the expression of passion or feeling in the human face and attitude. Physical beauty runs and flows upon the surface of things, but this other and more subtle beauty lies deep and unfathomable in the secret springs of human nature, and is clothed with profound mystery and power which lies far off near the fountains of life, which move and dignify life in those few rare moments of existence when the true nobility of our natures asserts its kingdom. We have a genius more subtle than Humboldt and Miller, one who can penetrate deeper into the sources of being, and yet one who can feel nature in all forms and attitudes, and who can detect their nice alliances and affinities